

Tale Of Two Cities

# On The Prowl With A Prowl Car

(Editor's note: This is the second in a series of articles about the Torrance Police department).

By RALPH R. GOZPERTZ

Every job has its thrill. Every activity has its challenge. Every routine has its excitement. Every form of service has its satisfaction.

Some find these things in dealing with the world that teeters on the edge of Good and Evil. It is 3 p.m. Thursday.

Officer "Tiny" Thompson and Officer Lee J. Ashman check in at the Torrance Police station for the night shift.

Following inspection, the men read the log, so they may be brought up to date on the day's happenings. They make out a "hot sheet," which serves as a record of stolen cars for which to keep on the look-out.

Next they get their assignment. They are on prowl for the night. They will patrol central Torrance. They take unit 46, an unmarked green car.

**Noisy Start**

The afternoon starts off noisily. A neighbor complains about a barking dog at 3:30 p.m. Thompson and Ashman check out the call and advise the owner. The barking stops.

Minutes later juveniles are reported going into the sewer at 222nd and Arlington, Unit 46 responds. Youngsters are GOA—gone on arrival, when the prowler rolls up. A protection bar across the sewer opening would put an end to such antics, Thompson notes.

The officers continue to cruise. Nothing much ever happens in the afternoon. Perhaps things will pick up during the evening, they figure.

**Tires Stabbed**

Suddenly a call comes through. Twelve cars on a parking lot at Cravens and Post had their tires stabbed. Thompson and Ashman rush to the scene. The tires are flat. A grim joke. They suspect juveniles. The officers get a description of youngsters seen in the area.

Soon it is supper time. They check out for half an hour.

Then they return to the prowler. The radio keeps up a continuous static. Code numbers, messages—back and forth. Thompson and Ashman ignore them—the way you ignore ringing telephones and office noises not meant for you.

"KMA-872 to 46 Code 1."

Suddenly they go into action. It's their station and unit. They acknowledge the call.

"46, 10-4."

"Go to 220th and Arlington. There are juveniles throwing eggs at cars."

"46, 10-4."

Ashman swings the car around on Torrance blvd., near Hawthorne and takes off for the designated area, acknowledging arrival:

"10-97."

Officers locate the egg shells. They canvass the area for juveniles. Juveniles GOA.

There's another message.

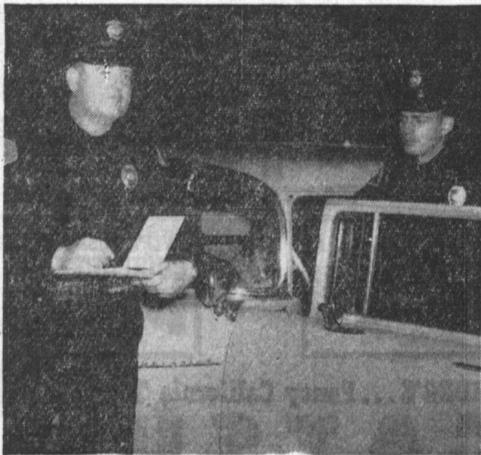
"KMA-872 to 46 Code 1."

"46, 10-4."

**Suspicious Solicitor**

"Go to Gramercy, northbound from 220th st. Find a deaf mute. Permit believed to be false. Soliciting on foot."

Unit 46 swings around the block and arrives at Gramercy. They spot their man. They drive up. Ashman and Thompson get out and approach him. He smiles. They do not return the smile. They are taught to be suspicious. They talk to him. He does not respond. They make signs to see



**PROWL CAR**  
Officers Thompson (l) and Ashman get ready to go out on prowler. They have been assigned central Torrance.—Press Photo

his identification. He brings out his wallet. He takes out a slip of paper. It gives permission for soliciting signed by the police chief himself. They return his identification. He looks up questioningly. They smile. He smiles. They make signs telling him that he can go wherever he wishes. He smiles again. They pat him on the back and leave.

Back in the car, they radio the station:

"He's got an OK from the chief. Looks 'kosher' to us."

"OK. Kick him loose."

"He's loose."

They continue to cruise. They try to avoid using the same pattern from night to night.

They check outlying stores to see that they're locked. If they're open for business, they'll flash a light beam at the owner. He signals back reassuringly. He knows that they're around in case of trouble.

**Tale of Two Cities**

It's a quiet night. Ashman maneuvers the car through the by-ways and back streets of Torrance.

Torrance has become two cities: one is the city seen by the ordinary citizen; the other is the city a cop knows.

An empty field becomes the hiding place for "hot" cars; an invisible, forsaken road leads to an invisible, forsaken clearing—ready-made setting for sex offenses; baseball bleachers become the lodgings of impoverished winos who seek shelter, and forgetfulness.

A cop's map of Torrance is a systematic outline of potential crime.

Sometimes Ashman and Thompson ride in silence. Sometimes they talk . . .

They wonder if they'll have any family beefs that night. They hope not. It's too early, anyway. Besides, it isn't pay day—or a week-end. Those are nasty things—family beefs.

The woman is usually worse than the man when they're drunk. You tell them to sleep in separate rooms or move out for the night. You can't do much. You try to maintain the peace.

You get some strange calls. One wife complains because the old man won't let her go to the movies. The other one because he has deserted her. From the ridiculous to the sublime, or something.

Remember the guy who was trying to commit suicide because his wife made so much noise? Told him to make some noise, too. He was happy. Never thought of that.

It's 9:50 p.m. now. One hour and 10 minutes to go. The officers see a middle-aged couple going down the street. They look drunk. Thompson and Ashman drive up and talk to them.

The man and woman don't want any trouble. She parked the car somewhere and now they can't find it. They only live a few blocks away.

The officers suggest that they walk home and look for the car in the morning.

"OK, Angel," the woman grins happily.

"Thanks, Jackson," the man exclaims, relieved.

They stagger home, arguing.

"KMA-872 to 46 Code 1."

"46, 10-4."

"Go to Torrance park. There are juveniles throwing eggs and shooting off fire crackers."

"46, 10-4."

The cops light out for Torrance park. They canvass the park. The juveniles are gone again. The night air is cold. There are eerie shadows and weird noises.

Thompson and Ashman return to the car. It is almost eleven. They cruise a bit longer.

It is a routine night. Yet every second of it Thompson and Ashman, and every cop on the beat, are ready with a benevolent word, a bold approach—or a bullet!

(NEXT WEEK: Drunk Drivers Must Pay).

## Local Mental Health Clinics Praise Proposed Bills

In addition to increased professional staff, the San Pedro and Long Beach branch clinics of the Los Angeles State Mental Hygiene clinic are congratulating themselves on the results of the interest of the many individuals and community organizations who have continued to work for the passage of a Community Mental Health Services act.

The Harbor District Mental Health Service announces that as a culmination of educational work in the field of mental health, Senate Bill 244 and Senate Bill 245 (appropriation bill) sponsored by the California Medical Assn. was introduced in the Senate, January 11, with 27 senators as co-authors.

Senator Alan Short heads the list of co-authors. Some of the members of the Senate Governmental Efficiency committee, who were instrumental in defeating the bill in committee in 1955, now are among the authors of the 1957 bill. A companion bill, Assembly Bill 630, (to be known as the Short-Doyle bill) introduced by Assemblyman Donald Doyle, has 55 Assembly co-authors.

**Comprehensive Study**  
The comprehensive and painstaking study by Senator Alan Short's Senate Interim Commit-

tee on the Treatment of Mental Illness offered conclusive proof to many state senators and assemblymen that an educational and conservation program in mental health at the local level was a joint responsibility of local and state governments and that the cost of establishing local mental health services should be shared by local and state governments on a 50-50 basis.

Such a program could best provide low-cost part by psychiatric care to the average family in the community. Many referrals to the San Pedro and Long Beach branch clinics are made by private and public health nurses and private physicians in the community.

**Community Clinic**  
The Harbor District Mental Health Service functions as a community auxiliary to the San Pedro State Mental Hygiene Clinic located at 731 S. Beacon st., San Pedro.

The clinic is open Monday through Friday from 9 to 5 p.m. and applications may be made in person or by telephone to Terminal 3-3547. Low cost psychiatric care is available to anyone who is unable to secure private services.

## Brainstorming Session To Deal With Labor Turnover

Management executives from the Harbor Area will join representatives of voluntary and public agencies, and union officials, in a "brainstorming" session to be held January 31, at the Hacienda hotel, San Pedro, according to Seymour Barfield, temporary chairman of the Occupational Health Committee of the Harbor Area Welfare Planning council.

Topic of the meeting is "How to reduce labor turnover in business and industry." Some 75 business and agency executives are expected to attend.

At the session a technique of creative thinking, "Brainstorming," will be applied here for the first time to a business and community problem. The object is to pool the ideas of those persons most familiar with labor turnover.

Carl E. Gregory, Ph.D., and Charles H. Tilden, Ed. D., from the faculty of Long Beach State College, will moderate the session. Under their guidance members of the group will be encouraged to speak out every idea that comes to mind concerning the topic. The aim is to stimulate a free flow of common and novel solutions.

At the conclusion of the brainstorming session, the results will be discussed at a dinner meeting. Follow-up methods to put the best ideas into effect will also be outlined.

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- Apply non-skid backing to scatter rugs or tack them to the floor.
- Replace worn electric cords and defective electrical equipment.
- Do not touch an electric appliance or switch while you are standing in water.
- Keep poisons and matches beyond reach of children.
- Use a solidly-built ladder or step-stool of sufficient height to reach high places.
- Keep gas heaters in good repair.
- Do not leave young children in the house alone.

Teach your children safety at an early age. Always be on guard against hazards. Learn the hazards in your home and eliminate them. Make your home at least as safe as your place of work.

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